Reduced No-Show Rates and Sustained Patient Satisfaction of Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic thrusted the relatively novel approach of telemedicine to the center stage of healthcare infrastructures within the U.S. and around the globe, leading to a dramatically increased utilization of telehealth services. Since the first reported case of COVID-19 in the U.S. on January 20, 2020, telemedicine has played a large role in reducing viral transmission by preserving PPE and supporting crippled healthcare revenue streams.1,2 The convenience of these services has also reduced caregiver burden and travel costs for patients.1,2 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have consistently demonstrated a strong association between telehealth utilization and increased patient satisfaction.3–6 The impact of telemedicine on patient satisfaction during the current pandemic has yet to be fully understood.

The goal of this study is to identify patient perspectives and satisfaction with the virtual appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic to help guide future implementation of telehealth services.

METHODS

This prospective patient survey study was performed at a Primary and Specialty Care Clinic in Columbus, Ohio on patients seen between March 16th – May 1st, 2020.

Patients completed a survey either in person or via phone following their telehealth visit.

The survey analyzed multiple satisfaction metrics including friendliness of registration staff, convenience of appointment times, and communication with physicians.

RESULTS

- The no-show rate for telehealth visits (7.5%) was statistically significantly lower than in-office visits (36.1%) during the pandemic (p<0.0001) and the baseline no-show rate (29.8%) prior to the pandemic (p<0.0001).
- Patients who had telehealth visits had similar overall satisfaction metrics to those who had in-office visits, with the exceptions being reports of the registration staff not being rated as friendly during telehealth visits (p=0.0479) and patients feeling like they did not spend as much time with their doctor during telehealth visits (p=0.0018).
- There were no statistically significant differences in overall satisfaction between patients who had a video telehealth visit versus those who had a phone-only telehealth visit, although patients who had a phone-only visit were more likely to be age 65 or over (p=0.0031).
- The most frequently suggested improvement from patients was related to improving technology (20% of patients).

Survey Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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CONCLUSIONS

Telehealth appointments resulted in comparable and positive overall patient satisfaction metrics with a significant reduction in missed appointments compared to those who had in-person office visits both during and before the pandemic. There were no differences in satisfaction metrics between patients who had a video versus a phone-only telehealth visit. Although registration staff were not rated as friendly and patients felt like they did not spend as much time with their doctor during telehealth visits, these findings provide areas for future improvement in the virtual service.

Collectively, these data strongly support the widespread utilization of telemedicine during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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